

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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CIRCUS YARNS and CIRCUS PROGRAMMES

by
"Taffy" Harris
Wales

PART I

One of the many things we have missed in Britain during the war years is the travelling circus, animal fodder was severely rationed, petrol was practically unprocurable, and the artists of both sexes called to the forces, all these combined to drive the big tops off the road, but I am pleased to see some have commenced tenting this summer, including Bertram Mills, which is now the biggest circus touring this country.

Although I have not witnessed a ring show during the past six years, I have not lost touch with them, as I have some old circus yarns, and a small collection of programmes, and glancing through these I am happy to state they have brought a little summer into the winter of my discontent.

I have read many circus tales, American and British, the Americans were published mostly by the Aldine company, and were more exciting than ours, one was in the "Garfield Boy's Journal" by the well known animal trainer Dick Maltby, and recorded the adventures of two of Barnum and Bailey's elephant trainers. These were George Conklin, and William Newman, and it was my privilege to view their performance when Barnum visited Wales a couple of years later, another fine yarn was "The Boy Wonder," or the star of the circus, although the story was American, all the illustra-

tions were British, the coloured cover was by that fine artist Robert Prowse. The Amalgamated Press published some good tales of circus life notably by Henry St. John, and Harwood Panting, but they failed to thrill me like the Aldine old timers, one book I am never tired of reading is "Seventy Years a Showman," by that fine old circus proprietor Lord George Lang-er, he spent most of his years on the road, his last tenting season was in 1905, when between March 21st, and Oct. 21st he travelled 3300 miles all by horse transport, giving two performances every 24 hours, this being an excellent finish for a man who had long passed the allotted span of three score years, and ten.

PART II

Perhaps it will interest American readers if I refer to the programmes of the first, and last American circuses to visit our country, the former was Howe and Cushing, they crossed the Atlantic in the good ship Southampton and landed in Liverpool April 1857 with the largest company, and steed that ever invaded these shores. Their big top was the largest ever seen in Great Britain, Hengleurs had a permanent circus in Liverpool, and were putting up a good show and Howe and Cushing did not have things all their own way. Later they pulled up their stakes, and took to the road, here they met with stiff opposition from Langers, Ginnett, and Bostock and Wombells, Langers at this period were exceptionally strong and great rivalry existed between them and the American circus, both shows were billed in Preston on the same date. Showmen

from all over the country came to witness their performances, and were loud in their praises of the programme both shows put up. Some time later Howe and Cushing decided to return to the U. S. A., but like all true Americans they did not leave without a souvenir of the old country. Langer's star turn was a den of performing lions, with James Crockett as trainer, so Howe and Cushing negotiated with him for their transfer, and Britain lost their best group of performing lions, and one of their most efficient trainers. Two years later Crockett dropped dead in one of the busy thoroughfares of Chicago.

One of my most treasured programmes is that of Barnum and Bailey with its glazed illuminated cover, with photos of the proprietors, this biggest show on earth was transported across the Atlantic in the liner Massachusetts transformed into a second Noah's Ark, having on board 400 horses, 3 herds of elephants, and a host of other animals. They toured Wales in June 1899, and was undoubtedly the finest circus ever shown in this country, and had artists and animals performing in three rings, and on two platforms simultaneously. One act which I have not forgotten was a feat by a bareback rider, Eugene Lecusson, who threw a back somersault from the horse on to a second while both were speeding round the ring. One of the finest display of horsemanship I ever saw in a British circus was by Bob Fossett, who with a basket strapped on each foot and blindfolded would leap on, and off the back of his horse four times, while the horse was going once around the ring.

We on this side would gladly welcome another visit from one of the large American circuses, but I am afraid under present world conditions it will not be possible for many years to come.

"OLD SLEUTH LIBRARY"

by Vice President Bob Smeltzer

Well; to reminisce; a few years back, because of my inactivity in the "Dime Novel" Game, I received a few letters asking for an "estimate" on my holdings, if presented "4 Sale." They just made me "LAFF," for closest to my heart are my "dime novels"

and story-papers.

I have often been asked how many dime novels I have, but, even out of "courtesy" I have always declined to even make a guess.

My pard, and president of the "Brotherhood" has been to see me and spend many pleasant visits with me. I have shown him a "heap" of novels, and yet, as I pointed out to him I would say "Ralph, look at that big pile, I dunno what is in there. What I mean to say there might be bound books, old rare Western magazines, old, rare newspapers, or rare "dime novels."

Gradually I get digging into that pile, and, would you believe it or not (Bob Smeltzer) not RIPLEY this time, I find some prized items I never thot I owned.

Here we are: I go into the basement and pull out of the bunch a sturdy pile. I always place the date of wrapping them up, and this has the date of March 17, 1931; so it amounts to just fifteen years ago, on ST. PATRICKS DAY.

Here they are, the "OLD SLEUTH LIBRARY."

No. 31; Hamud; the Detective. Listen; on the rear page is a list of Old Sleuth Library; under the caption of "Die Deutsche Library." Now I am all tangle-footed, for I thought they were listing "Old Sleuth Library," but NO, and yet it goes to prove the German YOUTH read the thrillers years ago.

With a German name some may think that I can "sprechen ze deutsch," but I cannot, for I only have a smattering of German words, so brothers I do not know what the titles refer to. Yet, at the same time George Munro printed a three column list of German Novels on the back of "Old Sleuth Library." This is No. 31.

Next comes No. 78, "Old Sleuth in Philadelphia, or Piping the Schuylkill River Horror"; No. 81, Billy Mischief or Always on Deck; No. 82, Variety Jack; No. 84, Mephisto, the Razzle Dazzle Detective; No. 85, Detective Jack the Wizard; No. 86, Young Thrashall, the Phenomenal Detective; No. 88, Old Baldy, the Weird Detective; No. 92, Phil Tremaine's Greatest Detective Feat; No. 93 Daring Tom Cary; No. 6, Old Electricity, the Lightning Detective; No. 10, the Brigands of New York; No. 12, The Twin Shadows;

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They are all in nice shape; most of them with UNCUT pages. Listed for 2nd class mailing privilege 49 years ago.

It is too bad that Munro did not give the titles of ALL the stories, so that collectors could have them.

I shall be pleased to hear from anyone interested in this old-time "Dime Novel" Library.

Also, for those who may not know, a "YOUNG SLEUTH Library" was brought out, but that was in the later years.

It seems that Nick Carter, Old Sleuth, Young Sleuth and Old King Brady are the detective thrillers, even to the present stage of the dime novel game, for once we pick one up we read it into the "wee-sma" hours of the morning before we go to sleep.

HOW I MET BUFFALO BILL

G. H. Cordier

The year 1892 was notable for the reason of its being the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America, and in honor of the event, a great Worlds Fair was held in Chicago on the shore of Lake Michigan. This fair was a marvelous creation in every way, and millions of people visited it before it closed its gates. A special guard was formed to guard the fair and protect the great wealth sent from all over the world to be put on exhibition. This guard was called the Columbian Guard of which I was a member. We had a natty uniform and for our arms, carried a short sword much of the same order as the romans sword. I have my coat, cap and sword yet, after all these years, and will keep them till I die as a memory of a most colorful and thrilling time.

The amusement concessions, were stretched along a wide avenue. The different buildings comprising what

was called the Midway Plaisance. Here was gathered shows of various discriptions, from all over the world; while thousands of strange people thronged the streets of the fair, and enjoyed its numerous pleasures. I wish I had space to give a complete account of the Fair, but lack of time prevents, for it certainly was a most wonderful event. Buffalo Bill had his 'Congress Of The Rough Riders Of The World' next to the main entrance to the Midway, and I often saw him as I passed along the Midway to my station. As I above stated it was indeed a most colorful, romantic, and artistic event never to be forgotten by those who took part in it or were visitors.

The world was at peace at the time and most every one had money to spend, so the Fair was a grand success. I had long cherished the desire to personally meet Buffalo Bill—the hero of all the boys of those days—and kept a bright lookout for a chance to gratify my ambition. At last one day as I was returning to the Guard headquarters, I saw Buffalo Bill on the Midway talking to some gentleman. I waited till he started to walk away when I stepped up and said, "Colonel may I have the honor of shaking hands with you." He stopped walking, glared at me for a moment, then laughed and giving me his hand, I had a most cordial handclasp. At the same time he said "Sure boy—Sure. Glad to know you." I bowed, and said "Thank you Colonel," and left him. And that is the one time I met Buffalo Bill. However I saw him many times afterwards riding along the Midway; or at his show, and also met many of the people who composed his exhibition. I was present on the day when the Princess Eularie of Spain visited the great show and was appointed to act as special guard as she visited the principal buildings of the exhibition. It was then, or shortly afterwards, that Buffalo Bill reached the height of his glory, taking his show to Europe, and being honored by Queen Victoria when a special exhibition was given honor of the occasion. Little did I dream as I saw him riding around the arena shooting glass balls thrown into the air, of the misfortunes that were to come in his latter years when, I understand, he lost everything except his home ranch and shortly after died.

NEWSY NEWS by Ralph F. Cummings

The Saturday Evening Post has in the August 3rd issue, a fine feature article on dime novels and the Dime Novel Club, with full page illustrations in colors. Bro. Bragin had a fine write-up in the Sunday Mirror for June 23 with 4 nice large illustrations of The Buffalo Bill Stories #114, Diamond Dick Jr. Weekly #584, Secret Service #439, Tip Top Weekly #234. Name of title is "Diamond Dick Returns."

Danny Bundza writes in that the Argosy Book store in New York is asking \$1.00 each for Westbrook's "Deadwood Dick Library." Wonder how many they sell at that price?

Bro. Geo. Hess of St. Paul, Minn., had a fine writeup in the St. Paul Pioneer Press Magazine supplement of May 5th on St. Paul. It has 30,000 volumes, with illustrations of Bro. Hess himself and novels. Hero's galore. Wow!

Bro. Capt. C. G. Mayo of Bryn Mawr, Pa. is a close second with his fine article "Quest for Rare Dime Novels" by T. Bird of Everybodys Week in the Philadelphia Inquirer, for June 16. A fine picture of himself, and four old illustrations—Muldoons Baseball Club in Wide Awake Library, Making His Way in Golden Days, Lion Jack in Frank Leslie's Boys and Girls Weekly and Frank Reade Jr. and his Flying Ice Ship in Frank Reade Library.

You know, Lacey Irvin writes that since he's been a member of the Happy Hours Bro., he has never met or talked with any other members, so fellows, if you get out his way (Kane, Ill.) be sure to look him up, for I'm sure he'd be very, very glad to meet you, as I would myself.

Elly Messier sends in news of the "Buffalo Bill Week," July 28th to Aug. 3rd, the 100th Anniversary, at Denver, Colo., approved by Gov. John C. Vivian.

Have you seen Fred T. Singleton's "Penny Peep Show," cards. They are great, all advertisers to "Peeps in the Past," will receive the "Penny Peep Show" cards, until their subscriptions are squared up. Fred has been sick a lot, and the big magazine was too much for him. The "Penny Peep Show" cards will have a rare old timer on it, illustration, with a synopsis of the contents.

Fred Pitzer says he hopes the brothers realize the great job that's being done in keeping interest in dime novels alive. If it wasn't for the splendid work, they wouldn't hold the place they do today in Americana, and he means that sincerely, and says the job on the Index is well done, too.

Fred Orphal says he visited July 10, last, an old time show trooper, "Yellowstone Bill," who is 82 years old, and in the old days belonged to the great "Buffalo Bill Show," of which he had been a rifle sharpshooter. Fred tried to get his full story, that might be suitable for the Roundup, but at his age his memory isn't so good, and his eyesight is very poor. He says he was a ranger out in Arizona.

Bro. Paul C. Maroske (H. H. Bro. Member #40) 4133—57th St., Woodside, Long Island, N. Y. who had a lot of New York Detectives and Beadles 10 or 15 years ago, died July 9th at his home. He was in his 80th year. He lived a good long life, but one with lots of suffering, as he has been sick a long time. He was a very good friend to our late Charlie "Chut" Jonas, Bill Burns and several others will miss him a lot.

A. J. Marks (H. H. Bro. member No. 15) 1130 Starr Ave., Toledo, Ohio, so we just heard, died a couple years ago. God bless them always.

Edward S. Ellis wrote these serial stories in the Saturday Night. Vol. 33, No. 38, May 9th, 1896. Florence Gilmore, or the Mystery of the Sea. Vol. 34 No. 24, Jan. 30th 1897, Carmina, the Beautiful, or the Pearl of the Orient. A story of Strange Adventures in the Olden Times. Vol. 35, No. 40, May 21st 1898, The Soothsayer of Ramah, or the Flower of the Orient. A story of the First Crusade. Vol. 36, No. 14, Nov. 19th, 1898, A Patriot Maiden, or the Lieutenants Love. A story of the Capture and Occupation of Philadelphia by the British in 1777.

How about an old Police Gazette of 1845 for your collection. Have been taken out of volume, otherwise all OK. Price \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00.

Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass.

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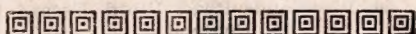
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